Good morning. My name is Alan Foutz. I am President of the Colorado Farm Bureau and currently farm 1,200 acres of wheat, sunflowers and millet in Akron. I appreciate the opportunity to provide comments to the subcommittee on water and power regarding the status of Colorado's water supply and possible ways to increase such supplies. Colorado Farm Bureau is the state's largest agriculture organization with over 28,000 members.

Today's widespread delivery facilities provide such easy access to water that most people take it for granted, even in Colorado, a state where water is considered the most precious natural resource. Like other western states, Colorado's settlement and subsequent economic progress was possible only by developing water resources from surface waters and underground aquifers.

Colorado is one of only two states in the nation that depends solely on precipitation for our water supply. Our state also supplies water to many of our eastern and western neighbors. Drainage throughout the state occurs through three separate systems, with all rivers originating in the Colorado mountains. All drainage west of the Continental Divide flows into the Colorado River, through Nevada and Arizona, and eventually out to the Gulf of California. The major rivers east of the Continental Divide are the North and South Platte, Arkansas, and the Rio Grande. Drainage east of the Continental Divide flows into the Gulf of Mexico by the South Platte and the Arkansas rivers which are part of the Mississippi system. Water from the eastern slope of the San Juan Mountains drains into the Gulf of Mexico by the Rio Grande River.

Agriculture is the third largest industry in the state of Colorado, with revenues reaching $16 billion dollars. Agriculture uses 85% to 90% of Colorado's water to produce food and fiber. Producing a typical lunch--hamburger, french fries, and a soft drink--requires 1500 gallons of water. This includes the water needed to raise the potatoes, the grain for the bun, the grain needed to feed the cattle, and the production of the soda.

Water that is not consumed by crops returns to the river system where it is picked up and used again and again before it leaves the state. We estimate it is diverted, applied to beneficial use and a portion returns to the stream for subsequent diversion seven times from the headwaters of a major river in Colorado to the state line where it fulfills our interstate compact obligation.

Surface water supplies, developed from natural streams, represent the largest source of fresh water supplies. The eastern plains and western plateau regions are semiarid, while the central mountains collect abundant precipitation during the winter and snowmelt in early spring. This water feeds four of the West's major river systems: the South Platte, Arkansas, Rio Grande, and Colorado. Mining and agricultural interests were the first to tap water resources from these stream systems.

The increase in population accompanying industrial growth has produced significant increases in the water demand by municipalities, particularly those on the eastern front range. Continued population growth, federal mandates for endangered species habitat and improved water quality will increase future demands for water supplies. While we

understand that endangered species must be taken into account, we believe that listing a species based on speculation rather than sound science often prohibits much needed water development.

Colorado is currently experiencing one of the worst droughts in our state's history. Most people believe that we are in the third consecutive year of a drought cycle in Colorado and that the state is in the fifth year of below-average snow pack. Based on the available information we have now, we are in the worst drought since 1977, with some river basins below 10 percent of their normal water capacity. Some estimates say that this is the worse drought in the last 350 years.

Typically runoff in Colorado equals 16 million acre feet. During this drought, however, runoff is approximately 6.4 million acre feet. Today, our reservoir capacity is less than 6.5 million acre feet. To put this in perspective, one acre foot is equal to 325,851 gallons of water or enough to fill a football field one foot deep.

Colorado farmers and ranchers depend on a reliable water supply to produce the highest quality of food for U.S. consumers. According to the Colorado Department of Agriculture, total water diversions in Colorado were 21.9 million acre-feet, with irrigation withdrawals accounting for 11.5 million acre-feet or 53% of all water diverted. The value of crops produced in Colorado is around $1.3 billion with three fourths of this total value depending on irrigation. These crops form the basis for Colorado's livestock industry, which produces $3.2 billion in sales.

Right now, this high standard and our way of life are in jeopardy due to our lack of water and our inability to store the water we are entitled to under our interstate compact agreements. Water conservation practices are a way of life for farmers and ranchers in Colorado. We inspect water systems before water begins to flow, clear ditches of debris and make sure ditch banks are sturdy, check nozzles for leaks on sprinkler systems, rotate grazing for adequate rest and regrowth, maintain riparian buffers, filter strips and grassed waterways as conservation buffers near streams, use conservation tillage to increase soil moisture and reduce evaporation, and plant crops that withstand dryness.

Water conservation practices, while important, will not satisfy future water supply needs alone. We must store the water that is rightfully ours instead of watching it flow freely from our state. Colorado is entitled to more than 16 million acre feet per year but we only store 6 million. Storage options range from constructing new reservoirs to enhancing wastewater reclamation opportunities.

Colorado Farm Bureau's member-driven policy states that we recommend that the number one priority for Colorado be the maximum beneficial utilization of Colorado water under the present system for the state, and a concerted program be initiated to build storage and water facilities. Our policy also states that we recommend the State of Colorado take aggressive action in funding and development of multiple water projects within the state with the objective of retaining all the Colorado-owned water that can be used by any basin within the state.

Colorado Farm Bureau also believes Colorado should protect the prior appropriations system, Colorado interstate water compact entitlements, existing water rights when interbasin water transfers occur, and allow the free market system to work in the pricing of water. In order for the state of Colorado to meet current and future water demands, policy makers, users, and managers should strongly consider a mix of several potential water development opportunities.

First, we must develop unappropriated supplies. At least 450,000-1.5 million acre-feet have been identified as new developable surface water supplies. Second, we must develop a cooperative water resource planning process for local, regional, and state agencies. Third, we need to develop alternatives for further funding, both private and public, for water project development. Fourth, we must encourage conservation and carry out programs to educate the public and water user entities about the importance of water efficiency as well as the importance of water resource development to our state's economy. Fifth, we must develop additional water supplies by supporting large and small scale water projects, wastewater reuse, and groundwater recharge programs. Finally, we must enhance and expand statewide computer databases and decision support systems to improve development and management of existing supplies.

Water is fundamental to all life forms, affecting all ecosystems and the various uses to which it is put. Often, these uses compete quantitatively and qualitatively with one another. At the same time, agriculture, industry, and rapidly expanding populations are increasing the demand for this limited resource. As a state, our challenge is to come together and build new water projects that will benefit every corner of our state and protect the water we do have.

Colorado Farm Bureau looks forward to working with the committee on western water issues and developing a strategy to meet our demanding water needs. Thank you.

Alan Lee Foutz

9177 E. Mineral Circle, Centennial, CO 80112

(303) 749-7603

Colorado Farm Bureau

BS and MS from Colorado State University in Agronomy. Ph.D. from the University of Arizona in Agronomy and Plant Genetics.

President of Colorado Farm Bureau, American Farm Bureau Federation Board Member

Own and operate a farm in eastern Colorado. Until 1989, irrigated 640 acres of crops. Taught crop production, primarily irrigated Agriculture, at California Polytechnic State University in San Luis Obisbo, California.

Colorado Farm Bureau President – 2000 to Present, Colorado Farm Bureau Vice President for eight years, Colorado Farm Bureau State Board Member from 1986 – 1992, Crop consultant from 1973-1989 in California and Colorado.

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No

No

No